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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [AJ](#)

SUBJECT: US AZERBAIJANI SECURITY POLICY DIALOGUE -- NEXT
STEPS

REF: A. BAKU 01837
[1](#)B. BAKU 01836
[1](#)C. BAKU 0158
[1](#)D. BAKU 001837

Classified By: Ambassador Anne E. Derse for reasons 1.4 (b, d)

[1](#)1. (U) This is an action request, see para 13.

Background

[1](#)2. (C) Since President Ilham Aliyev's April 2006 visit to Washington and the Secretary's February letter to President Aliyev outlining our three main areas of shared interests, the USG has sought to raise the strategic level of our relationship with Azerbaijan. We are working to create or revitalize existing forums that will allow us to deepen our engagement with the GOAJ on our three primary interests -- advancing democracy through political and economic reform, promoting energy diversification, and enhancing regional security. The Department has energized new forums that correspond to our political and economic reform and energy interests. In light of global and regional security developments, we now need to broaden and intensify our security policy dialogue with the GOAJ as outlined in the Secretary's letter. The USG needs a forum to build upon our

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existing, strong security partnership to advance US interests, while addressing the GOAJ's legitimate security concerns -- including Russian and Iranian desires to undercut Azerbaijan's sovereignty and restrict the US presence in Eurasia.

[1](#)3. (C) A/S Lowenkron's December 2006 visit laid the basis for an elevated dialogue on our democracy agenda. The next step on this democracy dialogue will occur with Foreign Minister Mammadyarov's March visit to Washington and meeting with the Secretary. Our economic and energy interests were advanced by the Economic Partnership Commission (EPC) and the following Energy Diplomacy Dialogue, which were co-chaired by A/S Sullivan and Minister of Finance Samir Sharifov. The EPC concluded on February 7 with an agreement by the Co-Chairs to speak on a quarterly basis to review progress and to have the next EPC meeting in Washington in February 2008.

[1](#)4. (C) The USG and the GOAJ participate in regular Bilateral Defense Consultations (BDC) that are rapidly developing as a valuable forum for direct mil-to-mil relations. We believe that a broadened and intensified security policy dialogue will help provide policy context for the BD's, and by addressing security issues of concern to Azerbaijan, will help provide the context to advance US interests in our

relationship across the board.

Why the Security Agenda Matters

15. (C) Strengthening our bilateral security policy agenda is critical to advancing US interests in expanding the frontier of freedom in a moderate Shia-majority state and diversifying world energy sources. Several geopolitical factors underscore the importance of our ties with Azerbaijan. Azerbaijan is located in the greater Caspian basin, which could serve as a corridor for advancing freedom and tolerance in Eurasia -- particularly as Azerbaijan strengthens its relations with and support for Georgia -- and a mechanism for diversifying Europe's energy sources. Azerbaijan's shared borders and delicate relations with Iran and Russia touch upon our interests in positively influencing Iranian and Russian behavior. Azerbaijan's proximity to the Middle East, active engagement with the Muslim world, and its desire to partner with the US not only in, but also beyond, the immediate Caspian basin -- in Afghanistan, Iraq, Kosovo, and Lebanon -- further reinforce Azerbaijan's potential significance for the USG as a security partner.

16. (C) There are a number of key issues on our bilateral security agenda: defeating global and regional terrorist and proliferation threats, supporting Azerbaijan's movement toward NATO, enhancing Azerbaijan's role as a supplier and transit country for energy supplies to European markets, strengthening security of critical energy infrastructure, bolstering Azerbaijan's sovereignty and supporting its independence in its relations with Russia and Iran, ensuring peace and stability in the Caspian region, and peacefully resolving the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. The GOAJ's desire to cooperate with the USG outside the immediate Caspian basin also could broaden the scope of our security dialogue. For example, the GOAJ has expressed an interest in working with

the USG to promote stability in Lebanon and increasing its contribution to efforts in Afghanistan on the civilian as well as the military side.

17. (C) Azerbaijan is a key security partner in Eurasia. The USG maintains a robust "Caspian maritime security" program in the Caspian Sea with the GOAJ that seeks to address regional counterterrorist and counterproliferation threats. Azerbaijan is a troop-contributing Coalition member in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Kosovo, and provides unlimited overflight and landing rights for Coalition aircraft bound for Afghanistan and Iraq. The GOAJ is taking steps to move closer toward NATO, and its foreign policy is focused on closer interaction with Euro-Atlantic structures. The relationship with NATO and Azerbaijan's IPAP commitments on political and economic reform also support our democracy agenda.

18. (C) The GOAJ has signaled its desire to deepen the level of cooperation on strategic security issues and to better coordinate our diverse security-related activities. Specifically, Foreign Minister Mammadyarov told the Ambassador on January 18 that he hopes our security dialogue can be "more useful and more fruitful." Deputy Foreign Minister Azimov also requested that the USG engage in government-to-government consultations with the GOAJ on drafting Azerbaijan's Military Doctrine and Foreign Policy Strategy (reftel A). On the issue of our counterproliferation cooperation, Azimov has raised the need for "better coordination and synergy" between the various bilateral programs related to proliferation threats (reftel B).

Creating A Robust Bilateral Security Dialogue

19. (C) We believe that the time is right to intensify the security policy aspect of our bilateral relationship, given President Aliyev's April 2006 visit to Washington and the Secretary's February letter to President Aliyev. Consistent

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with the Secretary's letter to President Aliyev, we have taken steps to strengthen our dialogue in the areas of reform and energy. The GOAJ's deep concerns with respect to recent developments with Russia and Iran further highlight the need to intensify our bilateral security cooperation (Reftel C). As recently as February, President Aliyev expressed concern at Iran and Russia's increasingly aggressive regional efforts with visiting A/S Defense Peter Rodman (Septel). We believe we need a forum at the policy level to address our bilateral security interests to parallel the BDC's valuable format for conducting our mil-to-mil contacts.

¶10. (C) We have consulted informally with State colleagues to plan for the upcoming political-military consultations with the GOAJ, and how to expand that forum into a broader "security policy" dialogue. We have also consulted with the GOAJ to determine their priorities for the consultations. Embassy has confirmed that Deputy Foreign Minister Araz Azimov has agreed to come to Washington for the pol-mil consultations on April 19. Per our exchanges with the Department and the GOAJ about ways to invigorate the quality and substance of the consultations, Embassy provides the following suggestions for the Department's consideration.

Specific Suggestions

¶11. (C) The agenda for an intensified security policy discussion with the GOAJ should include:

--Increased focus on Azerbaijan's NATO IPAP process. Deeper engagement with the GOAJ regarding its relations with NATO is a critical tool for substantively moving the GOAJ toward increased interaction with Euro-Atlantic structures and meeting its political, economic, and security IPAP commitments, expanding the frontier of freedom, and providing us with deeper insight into the GOAJ's national security goals. The USG should use the consultations to encourage the GOAJ to continue moving toward NATO, including on political and economic reform commitments in the IPAP that support our democratic goals, with the objective of the GOAJ agreeing to concrete benchmarks of progress. Another aspect of the NATO agenda would focus on how the USG and GOAJ could engage in government-to-government contacts on developing its Military Doctrine and Foreign Policy Strategy, which are key elements of its NATO IPAP. (Note: Azimov requested on 8 December that the USG engage in government-to-government consultations on the drafting of Azerbaijan's Military Doctrine and Foreign Policy Strategy. We believe it is in our interest to ensure

these two key documents, in such a strategically located country, fully reflect US interests. Reftel D.)

--Increased focus on the challenges posed to Azerbaijan's security by regional security actors -- ie. Iran and Russia. The USG already adequately understands that the GOAJ is concerned about Russia and Iran. We need to move beyond simply understanding concerns to finding concrete mechanisms to address these concerns. We should work with the GOAJ to identify concrete areas for bilateral cooperation to address our concerns about Iranian and Russian behavior and implications for US and Azerbaijani interests in the region. The USG should consider engaging with the GOAJ as we do the Gulf countries in the Gulf Security Dialogue (GSD). (Note: During PM DAS Coulter's February visit to Baku, Coulter broached the GSD with President Aliyev as a topic of interest. Aliyev noted approvingly that Azerbaijan was already cooperating with the US on most if not all of the GSD's six pillars and that "framing" such cooperation in a GSD-like format would be a useful sign for neighbors of USG-GOAJ engagement. Septel)

--Review the state of our bilateral cooperation on maritime and border security activities, with the goal of articulating how these activities fit within a broader Caspian security framework or strategy and increasing our strategic access to

the Caspian region. Taking this step would advance the US interests of countering transnational threats, bolstering Azerbaijan's sovereignty against Russia and Iran, and influencing a variety of Azerbaijani security units. This discussion should not focus on the technical details of where radars are located or how many boats the coast guard has manned. The focus should be gaining a broader understanding of Azerbaijan's strategic threat perceptions and how we can develop a broader Caspian security framework. Embassy proposes soliciting the GOAJ's strategic concept and goal for our existing maritime and border security activities as part of the security policy dialogue.

--This part of the agenda might also include the GOAJ's security concerns on the issue of Caspian delimitation as well as discussion of how the GOAJ can build on and more fully cooperate with the USG on its non-proliferation efforts, including clarifying GOAJ concerns on the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI). (NOTE: Deputy Foreign Minister Araz Azimov told the Ambassador that the GOAJ is hesitant to commit publicly to the PSI Statement of Interdiction Principles (SOIP) because Russia, who has committed to the SOIP, is likely to use the forum to pressure Azerbaijan to join Russian-led fora on counterproliferation, which the GOAJ does not want to do. He made clear, however, that Azerbaijan is deeply interested in working more closely bilaterally with the USG to achieve our joint non-proliferation goals.)

--Increased focus on critical energy infrastructure security. The Azerbaijani side should be prepared to identify the threat and specific infrastructure areas for potential assistance to address its energy security concerns.

--Focus on Azerbaijan's demonstrated willingness and its rapidly increasing ability as oil revenues burgeon, to play a role, especially diplomatically and financially, in enhancing security outside of the immediate Caspian basin. For example, the GOAJ has expressed an interest in working with the USG to promote stability in Lebanon and increasing its overall contribution in Afghanistan, on the civilian and military sides. Embassy suggests the consultations devote a session to exploring strategic security issues of mutual concern beyond the Caspian region.

¶12. (C) Embassy provides the following structural recommendations for the Department's consideration:

--Embassy suggests PM and EUR jointly co-chair the security policy dialogue. Enhanced EUR participation is essential to having an increased focus on a key pillar of our security dialogue: Azerbaijan's relations with NATO. EUR participation also would support discussion of broader regional and global strategic developments.

--Based on a review of last year's consultations and discussions with the MFA, Embassy suggests that the consultations remain at the A/S and deputy-ministerial level delegation heads.

--Embassy suggests creating two bilateral working groups that would meet periodically throughout the year to provide expert-level follow-up on issues that are raised and/or

decided at the pol-mil consultations. The MFA suggested creating these groups as a mechanism for making the security consultations more substantive and practical. Embassy proposes creating two working groups focusing on the most important issues: Azerbaijan's relations with NATO and Caspian region security, which could be the umbrella for a variety of maritime security, counterterrorism, counterproliferation, and regional security issues and activities, rather than a specific working group for every bilateral security issue.

--Embassy suggests the security consultations increasingly focus on creating a program of "next steps" or "follow-up issues" that the working groups could address during the

subsequent year. The working groups could formally report joint conclusions to the Chairs. The working groups could meet quarterly, alternating between Washington and Baku or by DVC. The Chairs could speak via videoconference six months after the April meeting to measure progress by the working groups.

--The existing consultations should be renamed the "bilateral security dialogue," to reflect the broader nature of the consultations.

¶13. (C) Action Request: We request that Department approve April 19 date for Azimov leading a GOAJ delegation to Washington for pol-mil consultations. We also welcome the Department's consideration of the preceding recommendations.
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